

# memo

To: Scituate Board of Selectmen  
From: Doug Smith – Chair – Scituate Historical Commission  
CC: Historical Commission  
Date: May 29, 2018  
Re: Old Gates School Building

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## **Background Information – Gates School**

By the way of background information, the Scituate Historical Commission was asked in 2010/2011 to determine the historical significance of the old Gates School Building for purposes of a Community Preservation Committee application. The application was for a facility analysis and assessment plan of the building and was conducted by the architectural firm of DURKEE BROWN VIVIEROS WERENFEL of Providence, RI.

Below is the evaluation of the Gates School at the time of the CPC application for the purpose of securing CPC historic funding for the facility analysis and assessment. The funding was approved and the analysis was conducted. (Note the A,B,C wings are now referred to differently in recent publications)

The Gates School was constructed in three phases. The first section – now known as the A wing was constructed in 1917, with the angular roof, spire and auditorium built in 1931. The B wing (where the gym is) was constructed in the late 1940's and the C wing (far area to the right if facing the building) was in the late 1950's. The section of most historical significance is the A wing area. Below is summation of the research done by Commission member Arthur Beale.

*“Although I could not find the original architectural plans, I did find a plan done July 31, 1929 for design work by the Architectural firm of McLaughlin and Burr of Boston that led me to believe that they also probably did the original design. The same firm also did further expansion plans in October of 1948 but had a new address in Boston. The original architect in the partnership, Horace F. Burr lived from 1844 to 1900. I don't have James E. McLaughlin's dates but it appears they kept the name unless another Burr joined the firm. In any case, they have several buildings on the National Register. They include*

*Walpole High School built in 1906-7 and originally designed by Loring and Phipps Architects 1892-1913, but expanded by McLaughlin and Burr in 1927 in the "Colonial Revival" style. McLaughlin and Burr also designed schools in North Attleborough, the town of Clinton Armory in 1914, Norwood State Armory in 1929, and Weymouth Town Hall in 1929 which is also called "Colonial Revival" and is found in a National Register Historic District. Foxborough State Hospital is also on the National Register. Originally built in 1889 it lists as its architects as Brigham and Soffard and McLaughlin and Burr.*

*I also found minor alteration plans for the Gates School done by architect Edward Nichols whose address I could not read. Plans dated July 28, 1952 show additions done to the building by architects Perry Shaw and Hepburn, Kehoe and Dean of Boston. On December 7, 1952, design work on lab spaces was done by Leonard Peterson and Co. Inc. of Chicago. Hoover and Hill Associates of Cambridge, MA, designed the building additions of 1959. In 1961 Scituate High School moved to its present location and the building complex became a Junior High School."*

### **Gates School around 1917 (Historic Portion)**



The Gates School has also experienced (what is known in historic preservation as) "muddling." Muddling is when a historic structure goes through *renovation* rather than *restoration*. The Gates School went through various additions and renovations to accommodate the educational use needed at the time of such activities. Muddling can negatively affect the historical significance of a property. It would take the skill set of a

historic preservation architect to fully evaluate what components of the existing building can be preserved or could be “unmuddled.”

### **Gates School after 1931 with angular roof, spire and additions**



A key consideration in evaluating historic resources is setting. The Gates School is located near several historic resources in Scituate – Cudworth House, Lawson Tower, Little Red School House, Cudworth Cemetery, Lawson Common and the Unitarian Universalist Church. The setting alone adds to the historical significance of the building. The key historical component is the main original section of the building. The architects are noted and constructed similar buildings to the Gates School (Colonial Revival) that are now listed on the National Register.

### **What makes a property historic or significant enough for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?**

Broadly speaking the following criteria are used to evaluate a property for the National Register. The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A.** That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B.** That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

*It is a common misconception that National Register listing protects property from demolition.* This is not the case. The National Register listing or eligibility for listing is useful for any projects involving the federal government and triggers a Section 106 review. The Section 106 review protects historical assets from harm when federal funds are used. Mitigation must be used to protect historical assets from harm.

Recently this has helped the Town of Scituate in two projects that involved federal funding or approval. The first was the restoration of the Greenbush Rail yielded the town several million dollars in historic mitigation funds due to the impact the rail restoration could have on the Town's historic assets. The second case was the Tilden Road cell tower. Without the identification of the town's historic assets and districts in place, a cell tower super structure like the one behind town hall would have been installed instead of the monopole structure that was ultimately installed.

There are over 1,000 documented historical buildings and assets in Scituate. They are listed in the MACRIS system on-line with the Massachusetts Historical Commission - <http://mhc-macris.net/>.

There are also 27 identified historic areas in the town. None of these areas are "local historic districts" or National Register Districts. They would need to go through a local designation process or National Register process to receive such designation. Their eligibility for listing however is useful in the triggering of any Section 106 reviews that involve federal funding.

Designated areas are as follows:

SCI.A	Fourth Cliff Recreation Area
SCI.B	Glades, The
SCI.C	Greenbush
SCI.D	Brook - Kent - Stockbridge Streets Area
SCI.E	Beaver Dam Road - Front Street Area
SCI.F	Gannett's Corner
SCI.G	Farm Neck
SCI.H	Lawson Common
SCI.I	Meetinghouse Lane Area
SCI.J	Lighthouses of Massachusetts (not a district per se)
SCI.K	Scituate Light
SCI.L	Tilden Road Area

SCI.M	Mordecai Lincoln Area
SCI.N	Gannett Road Area
SCI.O	First Parish Road Area
SCI.P	Dreamwold Road Area
SCI.Q	Dreamwold
SCI.R	Country Way Area
SCI.S	Curtis Street Area
SCI.T	Captain Pierce Road West Area
SCI.U	Captain Pierce Road East Area
SCI.V	Cedar Point Area
SCI.W	Clapps Corner Area
SCI.X	Booth Hill Road Area
SCI.Y	Clapp Road Area
SCI.Z	Grove Street Area
SCI.AA	Sherman Corner Area

**What restrictions does the Town have in tearing down or renovation of the historic portions of the old Gates School?**

The Town of Scituate would need to comply with the Demolition Review By Law. If the property is indeed considered historic then it would need to go through a review process with the Scituate Historical Commission. If designated significant the demolition could not be prevented, but could be delayed for a period of up to 12 months to come up with an alternative to demolition. A permit to raze a structure triggers the Demolition Review By Law. A renovation would not trigger the By Law.